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# Husa's Al fresco: an amazing coherence

Stewart Blackwell White

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Music  
White

HUSA'S AL FRESCO:  
AN AMAZING COHERENCE

by Stewart Blackwell White  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Bachelor of Music

Prepared under the supervision of

David L. Graves

University of Richmond

August 1982

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To date, no scholarly articles have been published concerning Karel Husa's Al Fresco for concert band (1975). This thesis will demonstrate how Husa has achieved coherence by strongly binding his structural and motivic material. His foundation for this binding are the intervals of the second and the third.

#### FORM

The main body of the work (that portion between the introduction and the coda) is clearly sectional. These sections have two distinct moods. One is "vigorous," characterized by brilliant timbres, loud dynamics, full scoring, and staccato rhythms. The other is "lyrical," distinguished by mellow timbres, moderate dynamics, sparse scoring, and legato lines. A rondo-like structure is effected by the alternation of these two moods, while the motivic material is always the same.

In the main body the rhythmic drive never stops, as even in the lyrical sections there is always eighth-note motion. Only in the introduction and coda is there a feeling of rhythmic stasis, a result of the sustained pedal, the slower tempo, and the absence (or in the case of the coda, the gradual dissolution) of the eighth-note motion. This is what distinguishes these two sections from the rest of the piece.

The allegro risoluto beginning at m. 37 is expository in that it presents and works out the various incarnations of the principal motive. The section beginning with the cantabile oboe melody at m. 89 provides a

respite from the drive of the preceeding section. At m. 120 a literal restatement of the motive occurs in its definitive rhythmic form. Measure 133 begins a graceful section with soft woodwind figures, muted brass, and long melodies. Husa subsequently weaves three separate lines, all motivically related, in an elaborate contrapuntal texture. The staccato dotted eighth-sixteenth figure and brittle scalar runs return to usher in the loud brass, which build to a climactic restatement, in the upper register of the trumpets, of the original flute melody from the introduction. This is accompanied by wild ad lib. figuration in the upper woodwinds and percussion. Beginning at the ancora meno, m. 249, the motive very gradually dissolves and the dynamics fade. Because the process is so gradual, it is impossible to identify exactly where the coda begins, but by the entrance of the muted brass at m. 260, a feeling of coda has definitely been established. The coda, a mirror image of the introduction, slowly unwinds to the final C-sharp.

The formal organization, then, is as follows:

mm.	1-36	introduction
mm.	37-88	vigorous exposition
mm.	89-116	lyrical interlude
mm.	117-132	vigorous restatement
mm.	133-191	lyrical development (with counterpoint)
mm.	192-281	vigorous consummation and coda.

## CONTENT

[Refer to Appendix 1]

Al Fresco opens with a c-sharp in the marimba; this pitch continues as a pedal throughout the first twenty measures of the piece. In m. 2 the third trombone enters on this same c-sharp and glissandos up to d. This gradual rising of the intervals out of the opening c-sharp is the method Husa uses for building his seminal motive. In m. 5 the piano plays c-natural and c-natural'. In m. 6 the tuba assumes the d on which the trombone faded out, raises it another minor second to e-flat, and falls a major second to d-flat (c-sharp). The piano now and again reiterates the low c-naturals. Hereafter, only the most important melodic and accompaniment figures will be discussed.

In m. 9 the first clarinet begins on the low d, glissandos up to a quarter-tone-sharp e (major second) and back down again. In m. 13 the tenor saxophone plays the first fully-formed melodic fragment and, significantly, it begins a minor second above the opening pedal. The pitches are D, F (quarter-tone flat), and F-sharp, the internal intervals being a minor third and a minor second. This is the second most important motive in the piece. The first trombone repeats this figure literally in m. 16. In m. 17 the first trumpet, beginning a major third above the pedal, plays a figure consisting of a rising major third and a rising minor second. The first clarinet and first oboe then play fragments comprising a rising major third and major second, and a falling minor second. With the pickup to m. 20, the flutes begin the

first true melody, and in it the principal motive is readily identifiable: in m. 21 the pattern B', G', B-flat', C' appears, and is then repeated with slight rhythmic variation in m. 22. This is the all-important figure down a major third, up a minor third, up a major second--the principal motive of the piece. Underlying this in the marimba in m. 21 ff. are permutations of the earlier fragments, starting with the secondary motive (the d, f, f-sharp figure) presented initially in mm. 13-17 by the tenor saxophone and trombone. The rising shape of this marimba line contrasted with the comparative stasis of the flute melody introduces an element of anticipation which is immediately strengthened (through repetition) by the vibraphone and first alto saxophone beginning in m. 25. In mm. 24-25 and 28-29 the horns harmonize the principal motive in triads. In mm. 30-36 the motivic consummation of the introduction takes place in the vibraphone, marimba, and piano. Beginning in m. 30, the secondary motive is presented against a reminiscence of the principal motive in the flute. The fragments rise, amidst tone clusters in the winds, to a fortissimo statement of the principal motive in augmentation. The timpani dominate the end of the introduction with a roll, molto crescendo, on the pedal c-sharp. Thus all main structural elements in this section have gravitated around this pitch: the opening and closing pedal, the various tone clusters, and the two main motives, one of which begins a major second below and the other a minor second above the pedal.



[Refer to Appendix 2]

At the *allegro risoluto*, m. 37, the clarinets, saxophones, and baritones announce the definitive rhythmic form of the principal motive with a distinctive extension highlighted by unusually large intervals [Example 1]. This is followed by a literal repetition in the trumpets, horns, and trombones with a different extension [Example 2]. At m. 46 a two-bar fanfare passage which is clearly derived from the motive appears in the trumpets. The first bar of this passage consists of a falling major third, and a rising major second and major third. The second bar begins a minor second higher and comprises a major third, minor second, major second, and minor second, all descending [Example 3]. At m. 55 the first trumpet presents the all-important motive in yet another of its rhythmic variations, over a chord of stacked thirds (a-flat, C', E, G) provided by the trombones and the other trumpets [Example 4]. Overlapping the end of this phrase, the alto clarinet, baritones, and tuba play an *espressivo* melody which begins as an almost literal restatement of the flute tune from the introduction. The kernelized rhythmic form of the motive repeated over and over in the horns, in a hemiola effect, provides accompaniment [Example 5]. Beginning in m. 66, the trombones, bassoons, and contrabass clarinet play another long-breathed melody drawn from the motive. Against this are the upper woodwinds playing the definitive rhythmic form and its first extension, along with staccato sixteenth note pairs of seconds and thirds in the saxophones [Example 6]. At m. 76 two augmentations of the motive are

sounded simultaneously: the clarinets and saxophones in quarter and half notes with a hemiola effect across the bar lines, and in the horns in eighth and quarter notes [Example 7]. In mm. 81-82 the trombones, baritones, and tuba have the first important melodic interval larger than a second or third. The effect of this descending perfect fifth is startling, especially as it is prepared by a descending minor second [Example 8]. At m. 85 the saxophones play the motive in eighth and quarter notes while the accompaniment lines glissando ever downward around them [Example 9].

The oboe melody beginning at m. 89 draws its main intervallic content from old material. At the same time, it introduces several important larger intervals, even if one disregards the octave displacement. The accompaniment in the vibraphone, marimba, and piano provides the usual major and minor thirds [Example 10]. At m. 100 the flute begins its version of the oboe's previous cantabile line accompanied by a repeated trombone figure consisting of a further variation of the principal motive in half notes. This passage is lent an unusual quality by the unexpected quartal harmony in the vibraphone, marimba, and piano [Example 11].

Soon the driving dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythm returns, heralding the reappearance of the definitive form of the motive in the saxophones, horns, and baritones. This time the two extensions are presented in succession without the intervening repetition of the motive [Example 12, cf. Examples 1 & 2]. In m. 127 the fanfare from m. 46 returns, its second phrase now separated by three octaves [Example 13, cf.

Example 3]. This and its own new extension end abruptly at m. 133, adding to the ethereal quality of the succeeding section: soft woodwind triplets, tuba with the dotted eighth-sixteenth figure (now in a much less savage role), and a long-spun melody in the piccolo, high mallets, and piano [Example 14]. At m. 148 the bass clarinet, muted first horn, and piano play a quasi-pentatonic counterpoint to this tune [Example 15]. More and more, the larger intervals (fourth and fifth) are becoming important. At m. 153 the oboe, E-flat and alto clarinets, and trumpets interrupt the lyrical flow with a repeat of the motive variation at m. 55, with the second half raised a minor second [Example 16, cf. Example 4]. This time the harmony is provided by arpeggiated triads in the saxophones and repeated staccato triplets on a major third (A--C-sharp) in the horns. Trombone glissandi and soft saxophone and marimba tremoli introduce a literal restatement in the clarinets, transposed down a major second, of the oboe's first lyrical melody at m. 89 [Example 17, cf. Example 10]. Now, however, it is complimented by a first horn line overlapping the end of the clarinets' first phrase. This horn passage is almost entirely stepwise, with a very few thirds, fourths, and fifths. Almost all these larger intervals occur at the end (mm. 177-8) when the line suddenly plunges to the lower register [Example 18]. At m. 169 the saxophones begin a third melodic voice, with material drawn from both the motive and earlier lyrical passages; octave displacement is prominent [Example 19]. Husa weaves these lines and their accompaniments into a highly expressive passage.

A descending chromatic scale in the upper woodwinds abruptly returns attention in m. 192 to the once-again martial dotted eighth-sixteenth pattern in the brass, snare drum, and piano. Alternating with this are "harsh, reedy" sixteenth note runs in the saxophones, to which horns and low clarinets are eventually added. This leads to the woodwinds, horns, and piano with pounding sixteenth-note pairs (in seconds and thirds) in m. 212. In the next bar, unison brass ominously proclaim the secondary motive beginning on the old C-sharp: up a minor third, up a minor second [Example 20]. Horns interrupt with the principal motive in m. 215 [Example 21]. In m. 216 the secondary motive begins a minor third higher than the first time in note values diminished by a half; and again in m. 217 a minor third higher still and with note values diminished further. The 5/4 bar (m. 218) accentuates the effect of this diminution by throwing in an unbalancing extra beat before the line reaches its goal at m. 219 [Example 22]. At this point, upper woodwinds and percussion begin chaotic *ad libs.* while low woodwinds provide a surging and ebbing bass in dotted eighths and sixteenths. At m. 220 the trumpets begin the consummative statement of the original flute melody, *forte* and *molto espressivo* [Example 23]. The tension builds to m. 241, where the principal motive is loudly proclaimed in strict homophony, alternated between the low brass and the rest of the ensemble [Example 24]. The dynamic highwater mark is reached at the *ancora meno*, m. 249, after a bar of *molto ritardando* and *crescendo*. The motive is stated in harmony by *fortissimo* brass in m. 250, and gradually begins to fade by means of dynamics, scoring, note

values, and register [Example 25]. It is during this unraveling that the coda begins.

At m. 255 the bassoons, horns, and vibraphone present the motive with glissando effect against the dissolving background [Example 26]. At m. 260 the muted brass enter, playing staccato thirds. At m. 263 the oboe plays a pickup, made up of rising thirds and seconds, to the last reminiscence by the flute (on the same pitch level) of its original melody at m. 20 [Example 27]. Below this, the tenor and baritone saxophones, baritones, tuba, vibraphone, and piano play the retrograde of the secondary motive on its original pitch level (f-sharp, f, d) [Example 28]. The accompanying cluster in the marimba slowly contracts as the English horn and trumpet play the retrograde of the secondary motive (B-flat, A, F) that the trumpet originally played in mm. 17, 18. This is followed in m. 270 by the first flute and first alto saxophone and then in m. 272 by the first clarinet and third trombone [Example 29]. Here the timpani begin c-sharp, coperto. In m. 274 the bass clarinet begins the last statement of F-sharp, F, D, (retrograde secondary motive) non espressivo with glissandi [Example 30]. Against a sustained c-sharp in horns, timpani, and marimba, the tuba and piano sound the low c-naturals in octaves, just as in the introduction, while the first and bass clarinets fade on their upper half-step, the d [Example 31]. The piano and vibraphone, in mm. 276 and 278 respectively, surround the pedal point with C-natural and D [Example 32]. In m. 280 while all other parts are in the last stages of

perdendosi, the clarinets attack and fade on a C-sharp in octaves, thus ending the piece just as it began [Example 33].

In the foregoing description, every important melodic and accompaniment figure was mentioned, and it was shown in painstaking detail how the internal structure of these figures was built from the second and third to the almost total exclusion of the fourth and fifth. Moreover, in many cases (especially the introduction and coda), the starting pitches of these figures have been shown to be related to the pedal C-sharp and to each other by means of those all-important intervals.

# Appendix 1

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

mar. 3rd + tuba

tuba

1st cl.

1st trmp.

1st cl.

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

ten. sax.

1st trmp.

hrt.

19 20 21 22

fl.

23 24 25 26

alto sax.

hrt.

bass cl.

vibr.

(alt. sax.)

27 28 29

(vibr.)

hrt.

cl. b.

bass cl.

cbass cl.

piano

30 31 32

mar., piano

tuba

bar., timp.





# Appendix 2

Ex. 1 37 38 39 40

cl., sax., bar.

Ex. 2 41 42 43 44 45 46

cl., sax.

Ex. 3 46 47 48

Ex. 4 55 56 57 58

Ex. 5

alto cl., bar., tuba

59 60 61

hrrn.

62 63 64

**Ex. 6**  
upper winds

66 67 68

brn., cbs. cl., tmb.

cl., trmp.

69 70 71

72 73

**Ex. 7**  
horns

76 77 78 79

horns

**Ex. 8**

81 82 83 84

trmp., horn, tuba

**Ex. 9**  
1st clarinet

85 86 87 88

**Ex. 10**  
ob.

89 90 91 92

vibr.

mar.

piano

Handwritten musical score for measures 93-96. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure numbers 93, 94, 95, and 96 are written below the top staff. The bottom staff contains rests and some notes, with the word "piano" written below it in two places. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 95.

Handwritten musical score for measure 97. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure number 97 is written below the top staff. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff.

Handwritten musical score for measures 100-112, labeled "Ex. II". The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure numbers 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, and 111 are written below the top staff. The word "vibr." is written above the top staff in measure 100. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 100. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 100. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 101. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 101. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 102. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 102. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 103. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 103. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 104. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 104. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 105. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 105. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 106. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 106. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 107. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 107. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 108. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 108. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 109. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 109. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 110. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 110. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 111. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 111. The word "mar." is written above the bottom staff in measure 112. The word "piano" is written below the bottom staff in measure 112.

Ex. 12

120 121 122

sax, horn, bar.

upper w/winds. #

123 124 125

1st alto sax.

126 127

upper w/winds

Ex. 13

127 128 129 130

trumpet.

trmb.

+bassn, bar.

hcn.

Ex. 14

137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144

picc., altnet., vib., piano

145 146 147 148 149 150

Ex. 15

bass cl., horn, piano

151 152 153

Ex. 16

153 154 155 156

trumpet.

157

Ex. 17  
cl. *p*

159 160 161 162 163

Ex. 18

hrr. #

164 165 166 167 168

Ex. 19  
alto sax.

169 170 171 172

173 174 175 176 177

*p*

178 179 180 181 182

*p* = = = *z* (hrr. ends)

(cl.)  
183 184 185 186 187  
(alto sax.)

188 189 190 191  
trp. etc.

Ex. 20 213 214 Ex. 21 215 Ex. 22 216 217 218  
trp., trmb., bar. horn. trmp., trmb., bar., tuba

Ex. 23 219 220 221 222 223 224 225  
trmp.

226 227 228 229 230  
trmp., trmb., bar., tuba

231 232 233 234  
trmp., trmb., bar., tuba

235 236  
trmp., trmb., bar., tuba

Ex. 24 1st trmp. 241 242 243 244 245 246  
trmb., bar., tuba 247 248 249

Ex. 25 1st horn. 1st alto sax. 2nd alto sax. 250 251 252 253 254  
Ex. 26 255  
bssn., horn., vib.

cbass cl., bar., tuba, piano

256 257 258 259 260

+bar. sax. +ten. sax., -bar.

(bssn., horn., vibr.)

bssn., horn., vibr., end

Ex. 27

261 262 263 264

ob. #

Ex. 28 265

-cbass cl., +bar., vibr.

Ex. 29

266 267 268 269 270

Eng. horn, trumpet

1st fl., 1st alto sax.

mar., horn.

Ex. 32

271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278

piano

vibr.

1st cl., 3rd & 4th cl.

+timp

bass cl.

Ex. 30

tuba, piano + over

Ex. 31

Ex. 33

279 280 281

cl.

bass cl.

Ex. 31